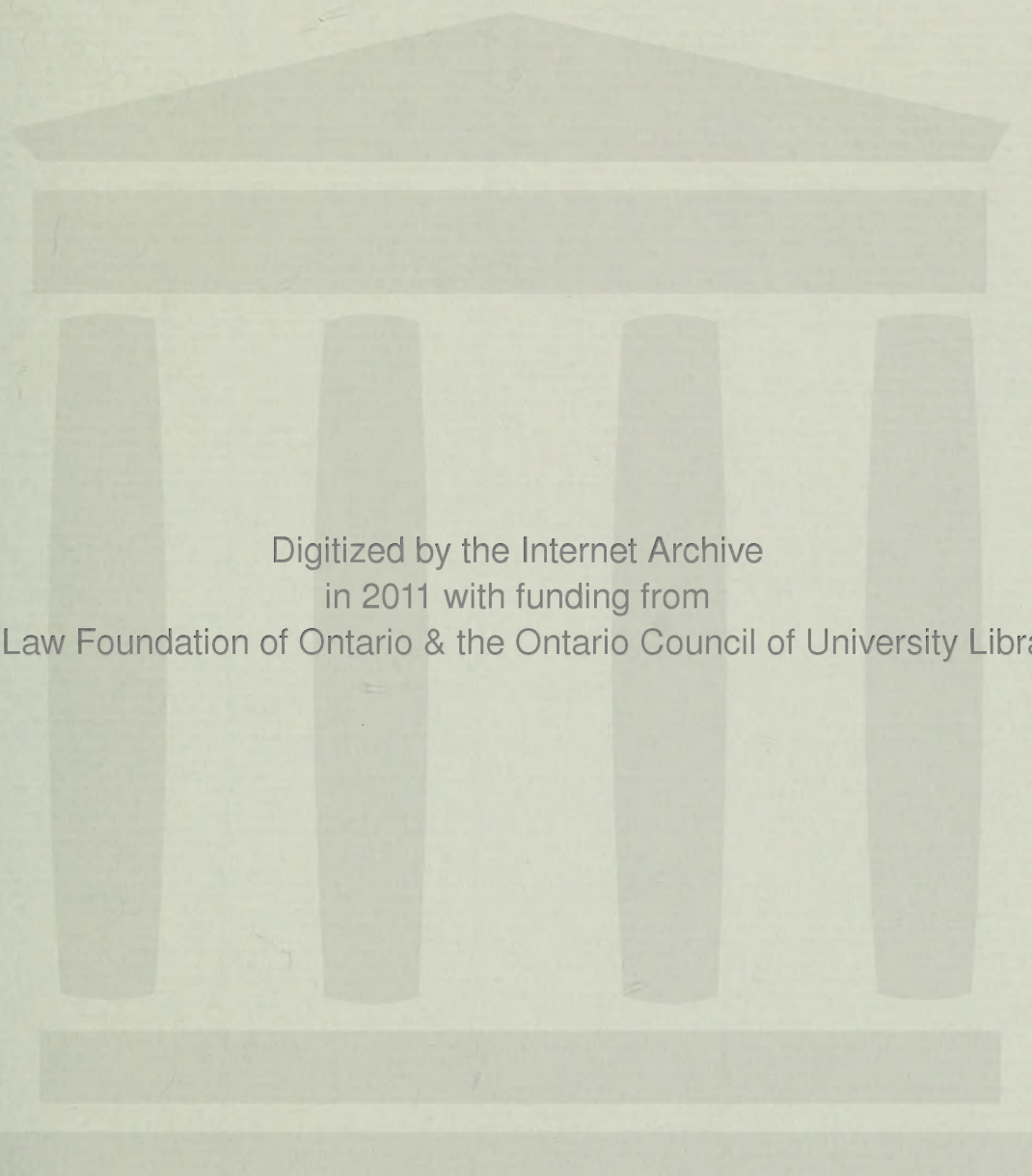


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ONTARIO
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IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE
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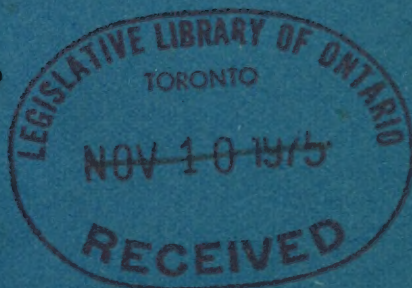
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TO INQUIRE INTO AND REPORT UPON THE RATES OF WAGES PAID TO MEN EMPLOYED BY THE HYDRO-ELECTRIC POWER COMMISSION IN THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE QUEENSTON-CHIPPAWA DEVELOPMENT, AS COMPARED WITH THE RATES PAID FOR SIMILAR SERVICE BY OTHER EMPLOYERS: THE ABILITY OF THE QUEENSTON-CHIPPAWA PROJECT TO PAY INCREASED WAGES: AND THE LIVING CONDITIONS OF THE MEN SO EMPLOYED.

PRINTED BY ORDER OF
THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY OF ONTARIO



TORONTO:

Printed by CLARKSON W. JAMES, Printer to the King's Most Excellent Majesty
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LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

PRESENTED TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY

BY COMMAND

H. C. NIXON.

Provincial Secretary.

Report of the Commission

TO HIS HONOUR THE LIEUTENANT GOVERNOR OF THE PROVINCE OF ONTARIO:

YOUR HONOUR:

We, the Commissioners appointed by Your Honour to inquire into and report in the following matters:—

1. The rates of wages paid to men employed by the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario in the construction of the Queenston-Chippawa Development, as compared with the rates paid for similar services by other employers.
2. The ability of the Queenston-Chippawa project to pay increased wages.
3. The living conditions of the men so employed.

Under and by virtue of a Commission issued under the provisions of The Public Inquiries Act and dated the 19th day of May, A.D. 1920, most respectfully report as follows:

That your Commission, following instructions, proceeded to Niagara and visited the Chippawa Canal Works and examined personally the housing conditions. In addition to this, several meetings were held—open to the public—and witnesses were heard on behalf of the workers and of the Hydro Commission. Your Commission endeavoured exhaustively to learn the attitude of both sides in the dispute; and while there was considerable difference of opinion as to the housing conditions, the length of hours and rate of pay, yet the men were of one mind in expressing their confidence in Sir Adam Beck and the Hydro Commission, and were unanimous in the opinion that the Hydro Commissioners, while anxious to complete the work as economically and expeditiously as possible, were also anxious to deal fairly with the workers on the canal. The workers all showed a disposition to be equally anxious to assist in the completion of the work and that this public ownership should be a success.

Your Commission report their finding on the three questions submitted to them, as follows:

1. The scale of wages paid on the Chippawa Canal compares favourably with the scale of wages paid elsewhere, but we find that skilled labour in factories is receiving a somewhat higher scale.
2. From the figures presented by the Hydro Commission, it would seem that the Commission would be unable to pay higher rates without a readjustment of the rates to the municipalities concerned.

3. We find the housing conditions fairly satisfactory, as compared with other construction works, and are satisfied that the suggestion that the workmen themselves appoint a committee to consider any defects in the housing and boarding system and to suggest any better method for conducting the same, would amicably adjust all difficulties.

Your Commission would respectfully recommend to your consideration the following:—

1. That some better arrangement of ventilation be provided in the machine shop and blacksmith shop, in order that the gasses which now accumulate would be carried off and thereby remove the possibility of danger to the health of the workers in these shops, and some particular attention should be given to the ventilators over the fires.

2. We would further recommend that improvements be carried out in the matter of ventilation in several of the sleeping huts and eating apartments, as suggested by Sergeant Neame, the Sanitary Inspector in charge.

3. We find that rumours of waste in the way of material on the canal was absolutely unfounded. That, if anything, there is less actual waste of material in this construction than is usual on works of such magnitude. That the reports as to an unnecessary number of automobiles and motor trucks are absolutely without foundation.

4. That an arrangement should be entered into at once, mutually agreed to, whereby the business agents representing the workers should make known to the management any complaints, and arrange with the management for a periodical visitation of the plant; but we believe that a considerable part of the friction would be removed if these visits could be made at a time and in a manner which would not necessitate keeping those employed from their work. In the event of not securing satisfactory consideration of their complaints, that the complaints be reduced to writing and a copy of the same filed with the Hydro-Electric Commission in Toronto.

5. In the opinion of this Commission, after careful consideration, the basic principle of an eight hour day, having been accepted by both parties when signing the agreements last year, and in consideration of the fact that this principle is generally accepted in industry throughout Ontario, should continue to be recognized. But that, in our judgment, in order to complete this public ownership enterprise in the shortest possible time, to meet the imperative demand for power, labour should be prepared to work the ten hours on the same basis as last year so far as hours are concerned, namely, at a rate of time and one-half for overtime.

We feel that this is necessary: (1) In view of the fact that it has been shown that the volume of production under the system last year was on the whole satisfactory; (2) That the industries of Ontario are very large employers of labour, and therefore, labour, as a whole, will reap a measure of benefit from the concession asked of their representatives on this construction work; (3) From the evidence produced we are satisfied that this work can only be accomplished speedily and economically on two shifts of ten hours each, as under existing conditions the

eight-hour shifts seem impracticable; (4) That the Commission feels, in view of the great demand for Hydro power, that it would be lamentable if the work were not pushed to completion with all possible speed.

6. We feel it is our duty to say that the Chippawa Development is deserving of the very heartiest and most loyal support of the people of the Province.

All of which is most respectfully submitted.

EDGAR WATSON,
Chairman.

M. MACBRIDE.
W. H. CASSELMAN.
A. E. ROSS.
J. C. TOLMIE.

Dated at Toronto, this 4th day of June, A.D. 1920.

Mr. Casselman, one of the members of the Commission, dissents from Clause 5, and submits the following as his judgment: "That the operation of the Queenston-Chippawa development work be carried on under a straight ten hour day without overtime, at a scale of wages that will put the men on an equal footing with men engaged in similar construction work."

My reasons for dissenting are as follows:—

This development work has become an absolute and immediate necessity for the Province of Ontario. To maintain her industrial position Ontario must be able to compete with Quebec in the cost of production of power.

This work is of as much benefit to the labour men as to any other class of citizen, and to my mind there is no reason why labour should reap the benefits of increased pay for the last two hours of a ten-hour day and the rest of the citizens

An eight-hour day is not the most efficient or rapid way in which to complete a work of this kind. The idea of a basic eight-hour day with two hours' overtime state. We must have sympathy with the ideals of labour but we should not allow these sympathies to stand in the way of industry which is to benefit the whole.

Labour should receive fair value for its production, but at the same time the people should receive fair value for their money which is to pay for it all. The capital cost of this work must be taken into consideration, as a high capital cost would menace Ontario's industrial situation. Figures have been produced during the investigation to show that the ratio of cost as to production is much greater in an eight hour day than in a ten hour day.

(Sgd.) W. H. CASSELMAN.

Observations by Mr. MacBride.

In my opinion there is no need for alarm over the increased cost of the Queenston-Chippawa Development. It cannot be expected that the original estimates (made some years ago) would be at all adequate to meet costs under the present abnormal conditions.

The increases, so far as labour is concerned, are but a small fraction of the total. In my opinion, any operation or undertaking under public auspices should at least pay wages and provide working conditions on an equal basis to the conditions prevailing throughout the Province.

To pay labour less and to work longer hours in order that power users might receive power at the present prevailing prices, does not appeal to me as a just division of the responsibility for the increased capital outlay on any permanent development.

The municipalities on the Niagara system have enjoyed the boon of extraordinarily cheap power for a number of years and saved to Ontario industries many millions of dollars over that which they would have had to pay to privately operated power enterprises. During the past five years every known commodity entering into the process of manufacture has increased tremendously. Therefore, I see no reason whatever why we should not be prepared to accept a slight increase on our power prices.

To cover the whole increased cost of the Chippawa-Queenston Development but a slight increase on the thousands of power users in Ontario would be required. It is logical therefore that those who have profited by the great boon of the Hydro-Electric Development should now be prepared to meet the present situation and give their fullest measure of support.

In regard to the basic principle of an eight-hour day, it seems to me this must be conceded and time and a half paid for overtime. This principle has been acknowledged in the Peace Pact, signed by the allied nations after the great war, and is one of the chief labour clauses. It has cost labour many millions of dollars, many heartrending strikes and struggles to establish this principle. It is already in operation on all State contracts and public works under Federal jurisdiction of the United States Government. The eight hour law is also recorded on the statutes of many States in the Union and evidently it has been proven possible of operation on the other side of the line. I see no reason, therefore, why the basic principle should not be accepted in Ontario, and it seems all the more reasonable in view of the fact that the principle was accepted and put into operation with satisfactory results by the Hydro Power Commission and the Labour Federation upon this work last year. All the evidence goes to show that the production was satisfactory. I think, however, that in order to complete the work labour should continue to work ten hours but that they should be paid at least a time and a half rate for the extra two hours. I am sure if this arrangement is entered into it will avoid any further conflict in this regard until the work is completed.

The evidence so far as I was able to interpret it all went to prove: (1) That the work was a masterpiece of engineering skill and that the material waste was practically nil when compared with other construction work of this nature, thus refuting the unfounded rumours which were being circulated either by irresponsibles or the enemies of public ownership; (2) That the production and maximum results thus far were entirely satisfactory, both from a standpoint of the number of yards excavated and the cost per yard, proving conclusively that the management was all that could be desired and that the workers had not fallen down but that they had given a full measure of effort; (3) That the rumours of ex-

travagance in any regard were pure fabrications, and although the inquiry was conducted in the openest manner possible not one atom of evidence was submitted in support of any such allegation.

A particularly pleasing feature connected with the inquiry was the repeated assurance on the part of the workers examined to the effect that they had unbounded confidence in Sir Adam Beck and his disposition to treat fairly with them, provided the actual conditions could be brought to his notice. And I have hope that the evidence brought out in this inquiry will assist in creating a better understanding.

It would appear to me, therefore, that a round table conference should be held at once and I am quite optimistic that an amicable adjustment can and should be made in order that this development may be completed with the least possible delay. The need for power is imperative.

In conclusion, I desire to express my appreciation of the whole-hearted co-operation, the goodwill and earnest effort of my colleagues on this Government Commission, and to express the hope that results of a satisfactory nature will accrue to the workers, the Hydro-Electric Power Commission and the Province of Ontario as a whole.

M. MACBRIDE.

